

Joint Letter of  
**THE SPANISH BISHOPS**  
to the Bishops of the Whole World  
Concerning the War in Spain



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Joint Letter of  
**THE SPANISH BISHOPS**  
to the Bishops of the Whole World  
Concerning the War in Spain

Venerable Brethren ;

**(1) The reason of this document**

The Catholic Peoples are wont to help one another mutually in days of affliction, thus practising the law of charity and brotherhood which joins in one mystical body all of us who hold communion in the thought and love of Jesus Christ. The natural organ of this spiritual interchange is formed by the Bishops, who were put by the Holy Ghost to rule over the Church of God. Spain, which is now suffering one of the greatest tribulations of her history, has received many proofs of affection and condolence from the Catholic Episcopate abroad, either in collective messages or singly from many Bishops. And the Spanish Episcopate, which has been so terribly tried in its members, in its clergy and in its churches, wishes to give response to-day in this joint document to the great charity which has been shown us from all parts of the world.

Our country is undergoing a profound upheaval ; it is not only one of the bloodiest of civil wars which fills us with tribulation, it is a tremendous commotion which is shaking the very foundations of social life, and has put in danger our very existence as a nation. You have understood it, Venerable Brethren, and " Your words and your heart have opened unto us," we will say with the Apostle, letting us see the depth of your charity towards our beloved Mother Country. May God reward you for it.

But along with our gratitude, Venerable Brethren, we

must state to you our sorrow for the ignorance which obscures the truth of what is happening in Spain. It is a fact, which is clear to us through plentiful documentation, that the thought of a great section of foreign opinion is disassociated from the reality of the events which have occurred in our country. Amongst the causes of this aberration are perhaps the anti-Christian spirit which has seen in the Spanish struggle a decisive struggle for or against the religion of Christ and Christian civilisation; the opposing currents of political doctrines which aspire to supremacy in the world; the tendencious work of hidden international forces; the anti-patriotic force which has had recourse to misguided Spaniards who, shielding themselves behind the name of Catholics, have caused an enormous harm to the genuine Spain. And what hurts us most is that an important part of the foreign Catholic Press should have contributed to this mental deviation, which might prove fatal to the most sacred interests which are being contested in our country.

Nearly all we Bishops who subscribe to this letter have tried to strike, at the right moment, the exact note concerning the sense of this war. We thank the Catholic Press for having made its own the veracity of our declaration, as we also regret that some newspapers and reviews, which ought to have been an example of respect and submission to the voice of the Church's Prelates, have attacked or twisted them.

This fact compels the Spanish Episcopate to address itself collectively to its Brethren of the whole world with the sole aim that the truth, which has been obscured through shallowness or malice, may shine forth, and that they may help us to divulge it. It is a question of a matter of the utmost gravity in which are involved not the political interests of a nation but the actual providential foundations of social life; religion, justice, authority, and the liberty of the citizen.



Thus do we discharge, together with our pastoral ministry—which involves above all the teaching of truth—a triple duty of religion, of patriotism, and of humanity. Of religion, because, witnesses as we are of the great prevarications and heroisms which have had our country for a stage, we can offer to the world lessons and examples which fall within our episcopal ministry and which will be beneficial to everyone; of patriotism, because the Bishop is the first who is bound to defend the good name of his country, "*Terra patrum*," inasmuch as our Venerable forerunners were those who formed our own, so Christian as she is, "engendering her sons for Jesus Christ and for the preaching of the Gospel"; of humanity, because God having permitted that our country should be the place of experiment for ideas and procedures which aspire to conquer the world, we would wish that the damage should be reduced to the circuit of our country and that the other nations should save themselves from ruin.

## **(2) The Nature of this Letter**

This document will not be the demonstration of a thesis but a mere explanation, made rapidly, of the events which characterise our war and give it its historical complexion. The Spanish war is the result of the struggle between irreconcilable ideologies; in its very origins are involved the gravest questions of moral, juridical, religious, and historical order. It would not be difficult to develop the essential points of doctrine applied to our present situation. It has already been done plentifully, even by some of the Brethren who subscribe this letter. But we are now in times of calculating and cold positivism and especially when it is a question of facts of such historical import as those which have happened during this war, what is wanted—what we have been asked for, from abroad, in this sense—are living and palpitating facts which, through assertion

or opposition, shall demonstrate the simple and naked truth.

This document has therefore just such an assertive and categorical character of a practical type. And this in both its aspects : that of the judgment that we formulate in solidarity concerning the lawful value of the facts ; and that of assertion *per oppositum* with which we efface, in all charity, the false assertions or twisted interpretations which have been used to deform the history of this year of Spain's life.

### **(3) Our Attitude in face of the War**

Before everything else let it be recorded, in view of the fact that the war could have been foreseen since the national spirit was attacked roughly and inconsiderately, that the Spanish Episcopate has given since the year 1931 the highest examples of apostolic and civic moderation. Adapting itself to the tradition of the Church and to the guidance of the Holy See, it placed itself resolutely on the side of the constituted powers, exerting itself in order to collaborate with them for the common good. And in spite of the continual offences to the persons, things, and rights of the Church, it did not change its purpose of not altering the system of harmony long since established with the civil power. *Etiam dyscolis* : to vexations we always answered with the example of loyal submission in all that we could ; with the grave, reasoned, and apostolic protest when we were obliged to use it ; with the sincere exhortation that we have repeatedly made to our Catholic people for lawful submission, for prayer, for patience, and for peace. And the Catholic people followed us, our intervention being a valuable factor of national concord in a time of deep social and political commotion.

When the war broke out we lamented more than anyone the painful fact, because it is always a most grave evil

which often enough is not compensated by problematical advantages and because our mission is one of reconciliation and of peace: "*Et in terra pax.*" Since its beginnings we have had our hands raised to heaven that it might cease. And in these moments we repeat the words of Pius XI, spoken when the mutual suspicion of the great powers was on the verge of bringing war over Europe: "We implore peace, We bless peace, and We pray for peace." God is witness to the efforts that we have made in order to lessen the ravages that always form its train.

To our desires for peace we join our generous pardon for our persecutors and our feelings of charity for all. And on the battlefields we say to our sons of the one and of the other party the words of the Apostle: "The Lord knows how much we love you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

But peace is the "tranquillity of order, divine, national, social, and individual, which ensures to everyone his place and gives him what is due to him, putting the glory of God above all duties and making the brotherly service of all derive from His love." And such is the human condition and the order of Divine Providence—without its having been possible hitherto to find a substitute for it—that war, though it is one of the most terrible scourges of mankind, yet sometimes is the heroic and only remedy for replacing things on the centre of the pivot of justice and bringing them back to the Kingdom of Peace. Therefore the Church, even while she is the daughter of the Prince of Peace, blesses the emblems of war, has founded the military Orders, and has organised the Crusades against the enemies of the Faith.

This is not our case. The Church has neither wished for this war nor provoked it, and we do not think it necessary to vindicate her from the charge of belligerency with which the Spanish Church has been censured in foreign newspapers. It is true that thousands of her sons, obeying the promptings of their conscience and of their patriotism and

under their own responsibility, revolted in arms in order to safeguard the principles of religion and Christian justice which had for ages informed the nation's life ; but whoever accuses her of having provoked this war or of having conspired for it and even of not having done all that in her lay to avoid it, does not know or falsifies the reality.

This is the position of the Spanish Episcopate, of the Spanish Church, in presence of the fact of the present war. She was vexed and persecuted before it broke out ; she has been the chief victim of the fury of one of the contending parties ; and she has not ceased to work with her prayers, with her exhortations, with her influence, in order to lessen its damages and to cut short the days of trial.

And if to-day, collectively, we formulate our verdict on the most complex question of the war in Spain, it is first, because even if the war were of a political or social character, its repercussions in the religious order have been so grave and it appears so clear from its beginnings that one of the belligerent parties was aiming directly at the abolition of the Catholic religion in Spain that we, Spanish Bishops, could not remain silent without abandoning the interests of Our Lord Jesus Christ and without incurring the terrible appellation of "*Canes muti*," with which the Prophet blames those who, being obliged morally to speak, keep silence in face of injustice ; and then, because the position of the Spanish Church, that is of the Spanish Episcopate, in face of the struggle, has been wrongly interpreted abroad ; whilst a well-known politician in a foreign Catholic magazine imputes it to little less than the mental decadence of the Spanish Archbishops, whom he qualifies as men stricken in years who owe all that they are now to the monarchical régime, and who have dragged along the other bishops for reasons of discipline and obedience in a sense favourable to the National Movement. Others charge us with rashness in exposing to the contingencies of an absorbing and tyrannical régime the

spiritual order of the Church whose liberty we are obliged to defend.

No ; above all we reclaim this liberty for the exercise of our ministry ; from it take rise all the liberties that we vindicate for the Church and therefore we have not tied ourselves to anybody—persons, powers, or institutions—even though we thank for their protection those who have been able to preserve us from the enemy who wished to ruin us, and although we are ready to collaborate, as bishops and as Spaniards, with those who are making efforts in order to restore in Spain a régime of peace and justice. No political power will ever be able to say that we have departed for one moment from this line of conduct.

#### **(4) The Five Years which preceded the War**

We affirm first of all, that this war has been occasioned by the rashness, the mistakes, maybe the malice and the cowardice of those who could have avoided it by governing the nation with justice.

Leaving on one side causes of lesser influence, it was the law-makers of 1931 and then the executive power of the State with the practices of its Government, which persisted in roughly twisting the path of our history in a sense completely opposed to the nature and requirements of the national spirit, and especially opposed to the religious sense prevailing in the country. The Constitution and the secularist laws which developed its spirit were a violent and continuous attack against the national conscience. The rights of God being abolished, and the Church persecuted, our society remained weakened in the legal order in the most substantial part of its social life, which is the religious. The Spanish people, of whom a majority kept alive the faith of their forefathers, received with invincible patience the repeated injuries made to their



conscience, through iniquitous laws ; but the rashness of their governors had introduced into the national soul, along with the injury, an element of repudiation and of protest against a social power which had failed in the most elemental justice, which is that owing to God and to the conscience of the citizen.

At the same time the authorities on many and grave occasions surrendered their power to the populace. The burning of the churches in Madrid and in the provinces in May, 1931, the revolts of October, 1934, especially in Catalonia and Asturias, where anarchy ruled during two weeks ; the turbulent period which ran from February till July, 1936, when 411 churches were destroyed or profaned and when about 3,000 grave transgressions of a political and social character were committed, foretold the total ruin of the public authority which was often seen to succumb to the strength of the hidden powers which controlled its functions.

Our political régime of democratic liberty was unsettled through arbitrary actions on the part of the authority of the State and through Governmental coercion which overrode the people's will, forming a political machine in conflict with the majority of the nation, as occurred in the last parliamentary elections in February, 1936, when with more than half a million votes of surplus over the Left, the Right only obtained 118 deputies less than the People's Front, because the votes of whole provinces had been cancelled at will, thus corrupting in its origin the legitimacy of Parliament.

And whilst our people were being disrupted by the relaxation of social ties and our financial resources bled to excess, the rhythm of work altered without aim and the strength of the organs of social defence maliciously enfeebled, another powerful people, Russia, was combining with the Communists of Spain, by means of the theatre, the cinema, through the introduction of foreign ways and



customs, by casting a spell over people's minds and by material bribery, and prepared the people's spirit for the breaking out of the Revolution which could be predicted almost for a specified date.

On the 27th February, 1936, and immediately after the triumph of the People's Front, the Russian Komintern resolved to decree the Spanish Revolution and financed it with exorbitant amounts of money. On the 1st of the following May hundreds of young people clamoured openly in Madrid "For bombs and pistols, powder and dynamite for the coming Revolution." On the 16th of the same month the representatives of the U.S.S.R. met the Spanish delegates of the Third International at the People's House in Valencia, resolving in the ninth section of their agreement "To charge one of the wireless stations of Madrid, that one designated with the no. 25, consisting of police officers on active service, with the elimination of the political and military personages destined to play an important rôle in the counter-Revolution." Meanwhile from Madrid to the most distant villages the revolutionary militiamen learned the military instructions and they were armed plentifully, to such an extent that when the war broke out, they were able to rely upon 150,000 shock troops and 100,000 reserve.

It may appear to you, Venerable Brethren, inappropriate in an episcopal document to enumerate these facts. We have preferred them to the reasons of political law which could justify a national movement of resistance. Without God, who must be in the foundation and on the summit of the social structure; without authority, which nothing can replace in its functions of creator of order and maintainer of civil rights; with the material strength at the service of the Godless and of men without conscience, driven by powerful agents of international type, Spain had perforce to slide towards the anarchy which is the contrary of common weal and of justice and social order. To this

end have come those regions of Spain where the Revolution has followed its initial trend.

These are the facts. Compare them with the doctrine of St Thomas concerning the right to defensive resistance by force and let each judge with just judgment. Nobody will be able to deny that in the very moment the conflict broke out the actual existence of the common good—religion, justice, and peace—was gravely compromised ; and that the entirety of the social authorities, and of prudent men, who make up the people in their natural organisation and in their better elements, recognised the public danger. With regard to the third condition which the Angelic Doctor requires as regards the conviction of prudent men concerning the probability of success, we leave it to the judgment of history ; the facts up to the present are not contrary to it.

We reply to an observation which a foreign review applies to the fact of the murdered priests, which could be extended to all that constitutes this immense social trouble that Spain has suffered. It refers to the possibility that, if the rising had not occurred, the public peace would not have been altered ; “ In spite of the misbehaviours of the Reds—we read—it remains true that if Franco had not revolted the hundreds or thousands of clergy who have been murdered would have been spared and would have continued to do God’s work for souls.” We cannot subscribe to this assertion, witnesses as we were of the Spanish situation at the actual outbreak of the conflict. The truth is just the contrary ; because it is a fact proved by actual documents, that in the scrupulously prepared scheme of the Marxist Revolution which was being prepared and which would have broken out in the whole country, if in a great part it had not been hindered by the civic-military movement, the extermination of the clergy was ordered, along with that of those known as members of the Right, with the Sovietisation of industries and the introduction

of Communism. It was during last January that a leading anarchist told the world by wireless : " We must say things as they are, and the truth is none other than that the military have stolen a march on us to prevent our letting loose the revolution."

Let it remain, therefore, established as the first assertion of this document, that five years of continuous insults to Spanish subjects in the religious and social order put the very existence of the commonweal in the gravest danger and produced enormous tension in the spirit of the Spanish people ; that the national conscience felt that, once the lawful legal means were exhausted, there was no other recourse left but that of violence for maintaining order and peace ; that powers other than the authority considered as legitimate determined to subvert the constituted order by the violent introduction of Communism ; and finally, that through the fatal logic of the facts, Spain had no other alternative but this ; either to perish in the definite assault of destructive Communism, already prepared and decreed, as has occurred in those parts where the National Movement has not triumphed, or to attempt a titanic effort of resistance, in order to escape from the terrible enemy and to save the fundamental principles of her social life and of her national characteristics.

### **(5) The Military Revolt and the Communist Revolution**

On the 18th July of last year the military revolt took place and the war which still lasts broke out. But be it noted, first, that the military revolt was not produced, from its beginnings, without the collaboration of the sound element among the people, which joined the Movement in great numbers, and it can therefore be qualified as a civic-military Movement ; and secondly, that this Movement and the Communist revolution are two facts which cannot be separated if one wishes to form a fair judgment on the



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the Communist Revolution, allied to the Government armies, was, above all, anti-divine. So the cycle of secularist legislation of the Constitution of 1931 closed with the destruction of all that was connected with God.

We allow for every personal intervention of those who have not consciously fought under this standard ; we only mark out the general direction of events.

And so in the national soul there arose a reaction of a religious nature, corresponding to the nihilist and destructive action of the Godless. And Spain remained divided into two great military factions ; each one of them as it were cemented by the two deeply popular tendencies ; and surrounding and collaborating with them, there stood out, in the form of voluntary militiamen and assistance and rearguard services, the opposing forces which hold the nation divided.

The War is therefore like an armed plebiscite. The civil struggle of the district assemblies of February, 1936, when the lack of political conscience of the national government arbitrarily gave the revolutionary forces a victory which they had not obtained in the elections, was transformed by the civic-military struggle into the cruel fight of a people cleft into two tendencies : on the side of the insurgents the spiritual, which aimed at the defence of order, social peace, traditional civilisation and the mother-country, and very markedly, in a great section, the defence of religion ; and on the other side the materialist tendency, be it called Marxist, Communist, or Anarchist, which wanted to substitute, for the old civilisation of Spain with all its factors, the ultra-new " civilisation " of the Russian Soviets.

The ulterior complications of the war have not altered, but accidentally its character has. Communist internationalism has run to Spanish territory to help the Marxist Army and people ; just as, for the natural exigencies of the defence and for considerations of an international character, there have come to help the traditional Spain

arms and men of other foreign countries. But the national *nuclei* remain equal, although the struggle, being profoundly popular, may have come to take on the character of an international struggle.

Thus it is that clear-sighted observers have been able to write these words about our war : " It is a race of speed between Bolshevism and Christian civilisation." " A new and maybe decisive stage in the fight initiated between Revolution and Order." " An international struggle on a national battlefield ; Communism wages in the Peninsula a formidable battle, on which depends the fate of Europe."

We have only traced a historical sketch, from which this assertion may be made : the civic-military revolt was in its origin a national movement of defence of the fundamental principles of every civilised society ; in its development, it has been one of defence against anarchy bound up with the forces at the service of a government which could not or would not guard those principles.

Consequent on this assertion are the following conclusions:

Firstly : that the Church, in spite of her spirit of peace and of the fact that she neither desired the war nor collaborated in it, could not be indifferent to the struggle. Her doctrine and her spirit, the sense of self-preservation and the experience of Russia made this impossible. On the one side God was suppressed, whose work must be realised by the Church in the world, and there was caused to the latter an immense harm in persons, things, and rights, such as maybe has never been suffered by any institution in history ; on the other side, whatever might be the human defects, there was the effort to preserve the old spirit, Spanish and Christian.

Secondly : the Church, with all that, has not been able to identify herself with conduct, tendencies, or intentions which at the present time or in the future might be able to distort the character of the National Movement, its origins, manifestations, and ends.



Thirdly : we affirm that the civic-military rising has taken a double grip on the depths of the popular conscience : that of the patriotic sense which has seen in it the only means of raising up Spain and of avoiding her definite ruin ; and that of the religious sense, which considered it as the force necessary to reduce to impotence the enemies of God, and as the warrant of continuity for her faith and the practice of her religion.

Fourthly : for the moment, there is no hope in Spain for the reconquering of justice and peace and the blessings that derive from them, other than the triumph of the National Movement. Maybe to-day less than in the beginnings of the war, because the contrary factor, in spite of all efforts on the part of its governors, offers no guarantees of political and social stability.

## **(6) Characteristics of the Communist Revolution**

The Communist Revolution once set in motion, it is useful to determine its characteristics. We can confine ourselves to the following assertions which are based on the study of facts abundantly proved, most of them registered in fully authorised reports, both descriptive and graphical, which we have before our eyes. We observe that there is scarcely any duly authorised information other than that of the territory which has been delivered from the Communist domination. There still remain under the arms of the Red Army, completely or in part, several provinces ; little is known about the crimes committed therein, the most numerous and the gravest of all.

Judging as a whole the excesses of the Spanish Communist Revolution, we affirm that in the history of the western peoples there is on record no such phenomenon of collective savagery, nor any like accumulation of transgressions produced in a few weeks, and committed against the fundamental rights of God, of society, and of the human person.

Neither would it be easy, by gathering together analogous facts and adapting their characteristic features for the composition of criminal statistics, to find in history an epoch or a people which could offer us such and so many aberrations. We are writing history, without interpretations of a psychological or social character which would require special study. The anarchical revolution has been "exceptional in history."

We add that the catastrophe produced in persons and things by the Communist Revolution was "preconceived." A short time before the Revolt broke out there had arrived from Russia seventy-nine specialised agitators. The National Commission of Marxist Unification, during these same days, ordered the setting up of revolutionary militiamen in all the villages. The destruction of the churches or at least of their furniture was systematic and by rotation. In the short interval of a month, all the churches had been rendered useless for public worship. Already in 1931 the Atheist League had in its programme an article which said: "Plebiscite for the destination that must be given to churches and presbyteries"; and one of the provincial committees gave this rule: "The place or places set apart up to the present for public worship will be destined for collective warehouses, public markets, people's libraries, bathing-establishments, public hygiene, etc., as it may suit the needs of each village." For the elimination of well-known persons who were considered enemies of the Revolution, the "Black Lists" had previously been formed. In some of them and in the first place appeared the Bishop's name. A Communist leader said about the priests, in view of the attitude of the people who wished to save their pastor: "We have been ordered to root up all their seed."

A very eloquent proof that the destruction of the churches and the slaughter of the priests, in an exhaustive manner, was a premeditated thing, is its frightful number.

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Although the figures are premature we calculate that about 20,000 churches and chapels have been destroyed or totally plundered. The murdered priests, counting on an average 40 per cent. in the devastated dioceses—in some they reach 80 per cent.—will sum up, of the secular clergy alone, about 6,000. They were hunted with dogs ; they were pursued across the mountains, they were searched for with eagerness in every hiding-place. They were killed without trial most times, on the spot, for no other reason than that of their function in society.

The Revolution was “ most cruel.” The forms of murder took on characters of horrible barbarity. First as regards their number ; the number of laymen who have been murdered only for their political ideas and especially for their religious ones, is calculated to surpass 300,000. In Madrid and in the first three months more than 22,000 were murdered. Scarcely is there a village where the best known men of the Right have not been eliminated. Secondly in the lack of form : without accusation, without proofs, in the majority of cases without trial. Thirdly, in tortures : many have had their limbs amputated or have been dreadfully mutilated before being murdered ; their eyes have been put out, their tongues cut out, they have been ripped open from top to bottom, burned, or buried alive, chopped to death with axes. The greatest cruelty has been used against the ministers of God. For respect and charity we do not wish to give any more detailed account.

The Revolution was “ inhuman.” The honour of women has not been respected, not even of those consecrated to God. Tombs and churchyards have been profaned. In the famous Romanesque monastery of Ripoll the sepulchres have been destroyed, among them that of Wifredo *el Velloso*, the conqueror of Catalonia, and that of Bishop Morgades, the restorer of the famous abbey. In Vich the tomb of the great Balmes was profaned, and we read that

the people have played football with the skull of the great Bishop Torras y Bagés. In Madrid and in the old cemetery of Huesca, hundreds of tombs have been opened in order to strip the corpses of the gold of their teeth or of their finger-rings. Some of the forms of torture employed indicate the overthrow or suppression of all sense of humanity.

The Revolution was "barbarous," inasmuch as it destroyed the civilising work of centuries. It destroyed also thousands of works of art, many of them of world-wide reputation. It plundered or burnt archives, making historical research, and the instrumental proof of facts of a social and juridical order, impossible. There remain hundreds of slashed canvases, mutilated sculptures, and architectural marvels destroyed for ever. We can say that the treasures of art, especially of a religious type which had been accumulated during centuries, have been stupidly wasted in a few weeks, in those regions dominated by the Communists. Even to the Arch of Bara, in Tarragona, Roman work which had seen twenty centuries, dynamite brought its destructive action. The famous collections of Art of Toledo Cathedral, of the Liria Palace, of the Prado Museum, have been basely despoiled. Several libraries have disappeared. No war, nor any barbarous invasion nor any social commotion, in any century, has caused in Spain a ruin to compare with the present, with the concurrence, for the purpose, of factors that had not been at hand in former times: a clever organisation put at the service of a terrible purpose of annihilation, concentrated against the things of God, and the modern means of locomotion and destruction within the reach of every criminal hand.

The Revolution trampled underfoot the most essential principles of "The law of Nations." Remember the Bilbao prisons where hundreds of prisoners were murdered by the crowds in an inhuman way; the reprisals committed on hostages guarded on ships and in prisons without any more



the hatred of Hell incarnated in our poor Communists. "I had sworn to be revenged on You," said one of them to Our Lord enclosed in the Tabernacle; and aiming at Him with a pistol he fired on Him saying: "Surrender to the Reds! surrender to Marxism!"

The profanation of sacred relics has been frightful.

The bodies of St Narcissus, St Pascal Baylon, the Blessed Beatrice de Silva, St Bernard Calvo and others, have been destroyed or burnt. The forms of profanation are unbelievable, and they can scarcely be conceived without diabolic suggestion. The bells have been destroyed or melted, worship has been absolutely abolished in the whole Communist territory, if a little portion in the North is excluded. A great number of churches, among them veritable jewels of art, have been totally demolished, and in this wicked task poor priests have been obliged to work. Famous images of age-long veneration have disappeared for ever—destroyed or burnt. In several places the authorities have obliged the citizens to deliver all religious objects in their ownership to be openly destroyed. It must be pondered what this means in the order of natural law, of family ties, and of the violence offered to the Christian conscience.

We do not continue, Venerable Brethren, with the criticism of the Communist activity in our country, and we leave to history the true narration of the facts of what has happened therein. If we should be accused of having pointed out in so crude a manner these stigmas of our revolution, we would justify ourselves with the example of St Paul, who does not hesitate to vindicate with terrible words the memory of the Prophets of Israel, and who uses the hardest qualifications for the enemies of God; or with that of our Holy Father who, in his Encyclical on atheist Communism, speaks of "Such a dreadful destruction realised in Spain with a hatred, a barbarity, and a ferocity that nobody could have believed possible in our century."



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We reiterate our word of pardon for all, and our purpose of doing them the greatest good that we can. And we finish this paragraph with these words of the *Official Report* concerning the incidents of the Revolution in its first three months : " The Spanish People must not be blamed for anything more than for having served as an instrument for the perpetration of these faults." This hatred towards religion and towards the traditions of their country, of which so many things lost forever are the proof and demonstration, " came from Russia, exported by Orientals of perverse spirit." In discharge of so many victims, fascinated by " doctrines of Demons," let us say that when they were dying under the sanction of the law, our Communists have been reconciled in their vast majority to the God of their fathers. In Majorca only 2 per cent. have died impenitent ; in the southern regions no more than 20 per cent. ; and in the north they do not reach, maybe, 10 per cent. It is a proof of the deceit of which our people have been the victims.

### **(7) The National Movement : Its Characteristics**

Let us now give a sketch of the character of the Movement called " National." We believe this description to be a fair one. Firstly, on account of its spirit ; because the Spanish Nation was disassociated, in its vast majority, from the position of a State which was not able to represent its deepest needs and aspirations ; and the Movement was hailed as a hope throughout the entire nation. In the regions not yet liberated it is only waiting to break the weight of the Communist Forces which hold it down. It is also national by reason of its object, inasmuch as it aims at saving and supporting for the future the essentials of an organised people, in a State which may be able worthily to continue their history. We express a reality and a general strong desire on the part of Spanish citizens ; we do not point out the means to realise it.

The Movement has strengthened the patriotic sense against the exotic nature of the forces which are against it. Fatherland implies paternity. Its moral atmosphere is that of a vast family, in which the citizen attains his total development ; and the National Movement has released a current of love which has concentrated round the name and historical essence of Spain, with aversion for the foreign elements who occasioned our ruin. And as love of country, when supernaturalised through the love of Jesus Christ our God and Lord, touches the summits of Christian charity, we have witnessed an outburst of veritable charity which has found its maximum expression in the blood of thousands of Spaniards who have given it to the cry of " Long live Spain ! Long live Christ the King ! "

Within the Movement there has appeared the wonderful phenomenon of martyrdom—veritable martyrdom as the Pope has said—of thousands of Spaniards, clergy, religious, and laymen ; and this witness of blood must regulate in the future, under penalty of an immense political responsibility, the action of those who, once that arms have been set aside, will have to construct the new State in the calm of peace.

The Movement has guaranteed order in the territory over which it rules. We contrast the situation of those regions where the National Movement has prevailed with that of those where the Communists still hold sway. Of these latter may be said the words of the Wise Man : "*Ubi non est gubernator, dissipabitur populus*" ; without clergy, without churches, without worship, without justice, without authority, they are a prey to terrible anarchy, to hunger and misery. On the contrary, amidst the effort and the terrible ache of war, the other regions live in the tranquillity of internal order, under the protection of a real authority which is the principle of that justice, peace, and progress which assure the fulness of social life. Whilst in the Marxist Spain people are living without God, in the unhurt or reconquered regions Divine Worship is celebrated

profusely and new manifestations of Christian life abound and flourish.

This situation permits us to hope for a régime of justice and peace in the future. We do not wish to hazard any forecast. Our ills are of the gravest. The relaxation of social ties ; the customs of corrupt politics ; ignorance of the duties of the citizen ; scanty formation of a full Catholic conscience ; division of ideas in regard to the solution of our great national problems ; the elimination by cruel murder of thousands of select men called by their condition and training to the work of national reconstruction ; the hatreds and scarcity which are the result of every civil war ; foreign ideas concerning the State which tend to uproot it from the Christian ideal and influence ; all these will prove an enormous difficulty in making a new Spain, engrafted on the trunk of our old history and vivified by its sap. But we hope that the enormous sacrifice realised will assert itself in its full strength, and that once more we shall find our true national spirit. We are entering upon it slowly through a legislation in which the Christian sense prevails in culture, in morals, in social justice, and in the honour and worship which are owing to God. May God be the first good to be served in Spain, an essential condition that the nation may be really well served.

### **(8) A Reply to some Objections**

We would not fulfil the object of this letter, Venerable Brethren, if we did not reply to some objections that have been made to us from abroad.

The Church has been accused of having defended herself against a people's movement, transforming her churches into fortresses, and thus leading to the massacre of clergy and the ruin of the churches. We deny this. The attack on the churches was sudden, almost simultaneous in all regions, and coincided with the butchery of priests. The

churches were burned because they were the Houses of God, and the clergy were sacrificed because they were the ministers of God. The proofs are abundant. The Church has not been an aggressor. She was the people's first benefactor, inculcating Christian Doctrine and encouraging works of social justice. She succumbed—where anarchical Communism has prevailed—an innocent, peaceful, and defenceless victim.

We are asked from abroad to say whether it is true that the Church in Spain owned one third of the national territory and that the people have revolted in order to free themselves from her oppression. It is an absurd accusation. The Church did not possess more than a few and insignificant portions of land, presbyteries and schools, and even of this the State had recently taken possession. All that the Church possesses in Spain would not cover a quarter of her needs and answer to the most sacred obligations.

The Church is charged with the mark of rashness and partiality in mixing in the struggle which keeps the nation divided. The Church has been always on the side of justice and peace and has collaborated with the powers of the State, in whatever situation, for the common good. She has not tied herself to anybody, either parties, persons, or tendencies. Placed over all persons and things, she has fulfilled her duties of teaching and exhorting to charity, feeling profound grief at having been persecuted and rejected by a great number of her misguided sons. We appeal to the copious documents and facts which give credit to these assertions.

It is said that this war is one of classes and that the Church has put herself on the side of the rich. Those who know its causes and its nature can observe that it is not so. Even recognising some negligence in the accomplishment of the duties of justice and charity, which the Church has been the first to urge, the working-classes were strongly



protected by the law and the nation had entered decidedly on to the way of a better distribution of riches. The class-struggle is more virulent in other countries than in Spain. It is precisely in Spain that a great part of the poorer regions have been spared the horrors of war, which have been fiercest where the standard of prosperity and popular well-being has been highest. Nor can our advanced social legislation be forgotten, and our prosperous institutions of charity and public service, of Spanish and most Christian ancestry. The people were swindled with unrealisable offers, incompatible not only with the economic life of the country but also with any class of organised economic existence. Witness the prosperity of the undamaged regions and the misery which took possession of those which have fallen under the Communist domination.

It is said that the war in Spain is nothing but an episode in the universal struggle between democracy and Statism ; that the victory of the National Movement will bring the nation to State-slavery. "The Church in Spain"—we read in a foreign magazine—"in face of the dilemma of persecution by the Madrid government, or of servitude towards those who represent political tendencies which have nothing Christian about them, has chosen servitude." This is not the dilemma which has been put before the Church in our country, but rather this : the Church in danger of perishing totally at the hands of Communism, as has occurred in the regions where it holds sway, feels herself protected by a power which until now has guaranteed the fundamental principles of all society, without any consideration of its political tendency.

As regards the future we cannot foretell what will happen at the end of the struggle. Nevertheless we affirm that the war has not been undertaken in order to build up an autocratic State on a humiliated nation, but simply that the national spirit should arise with the strength and the Christian liberty of old times. We trust in the prudence

of statesmen that they will not accept foreign models for the structure of the future of the Spanish State, but that they will consider the requirements of the national life from within, and the course marked by past centuries. Every well-ordered society is based on deep principles and it lives on them, and not on imported and foreign accretions, which might do violence to the national spirit. Life is stronger than programmes and a wise governor will not impose a programme which may do violence to the inner resources of the nation.

We would be the first to regret that the irresponsible autocracy of a Parliament should be replaced by the more terrible one of a dictatorship without roots in the nation. We nourish the legitimate hope that it will not be so. Just what has saved Spain in this most grave situation has been the persistency of those age-long principles which have informed our life, and the fact that a great section of the nation has risen to defend them. It would be a mistake to interrupt the spiritual orientation of the country and it is not probable that the mistake will be made.

The leaders of the National Movement are charged with crimes similar to those committed by those of the People's Front. "The White Army"—we read in an accredited foreign Catholic Review—"has recourse to unjustifiable measures against which we must protest. . . . The ensemble of information that we have shows that the white terror reigns in Nationalist Spain with all the horror that nearly all revolutionary terrors afford. . . . The results obtained appear despicable in face of the development of cruelty, methodically organised, which the troops evidence." The worthy writer is extremely badly informed. Every war has its excesses; the National Movement doubtless may have had them also; nobody defends himself with full serenity from the mad attacks of a pitiless enemy. Rejecting in the name of justice and of Christian charity



every excess which may have been committed by error or by subordinates and which foreign reports have methodically enlarged, we say that the judgment that we correct does not answer to the truth, and we affirm that there is an enormous and unbridgeable distance between the principles of justice, of its administration and of their application, on the one side and on the other. We would rather say that the justice of the People's Front has been a terrible history of outrages against justice, against God, against society and men. There can be no justice when God, the principle of justice, is eliminated. To kill for the sake of killing, to destroy for destruction ; to plunder the non-belligerent opponent as a principle of civic and military action ; that is what can be affirmed with reason of the one side and cannot be charged to the other without injustice.

Two words only on the problem of Basque Nationalism which has been so much misunderstood and falsified, and which has been used as an arm against the National Movement. All our admiration for the civic and religious virtues of our Basque brothers. All our charity for the great misfortune that afflicts them, which we consider ours because it is that of the mother-country. All our sorrow for the confusion which their leaders have suffered in a grave moment of their history. But all our reproof for not having heard the voice of the Church, and for having realised in themselves the word of the Pope in his Encyclical concerning Communism : " The destructive agents, who are not so numerous, profiting by these discords among Catholics, make them more strident, and end by throwing Catholics into the struggle one against another." " Those who work in order to increase the dissensions between Catholics, take on themselves a terrible responsibility, before God and before the Church." " Communism is intrinsically perverse and it cannot be admitted that those who wish to save Christian civilisation can collaborate with it on any ground." " The more those regions where Communism succeeds in

breaking in distinguish themselves by the antiquity and greatness of their civilisation, so much the more devastating will the hatred of the Godless appear there."

In a foreign magazine of wide circulation it is affirmed that the people in Spain were estranged from the clergy because the latter were recruited from amongst the upper classes ; and that they do not wish to have their sons baptised owing to the high fees charged for the administration of that Sacrament. To the first we answer that the vocations in the different seminaries of Spain are recruited in the following manner : total number of seminarists in 1935, 7,401 ; noblemen, 6 ; rich, that is with a capital of over 10,000 pesetas, 115 ; poor, or nearly poor, 7,280. To the second charge we reply that before the change of régime, the sons of Catholic parents who were not baptised did not reach one in 10,000 ; as for the tariff, it is most moderate, and, in the case of the poor, non-existent.

### **(9) Conclusion**

We close, Venerable Brothers, this already long letter by asking you to help us to lament the great national catastrophe of Spain, where so many values of civilisation and of Christian life have been lost, along with justice and peace, which are the ground-work of the commonweal and of that virtuous life of the City which the Angelic Doctor so often mentions. The forgetfulness of truth and virtue, in the political, economic, and social orders, has brought on us this collective misfortune. We have been badly governed, because as St Thomas says, God allows the hypocrite to rule because of the sins of the people.

To your pity, add the charity of your prayers and those of your people ; in order that we may learn the lesson of punishment with which God has tried us ; that our country may soon be built up again and that she may be able to work out her future destiny, of which what she has accomplished in the past centuries is a presage ; and that, by the

effort and prayers of all, may be checked this inundation of Communism which tends to frustrate the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, the only foundations which have sustained the civilisation of yore.

And complete your work with the charity of truth about the things of Spain. "*Non est addenda afflictio afflictis*," to the sorrow of what we are suffering at present, has been added that of our sufferings not having been understood. And that of increasing them with lies, with subterfuges, with the twisted interpretation of facts. Not even have we been done the honour of being considered as victims. Reason and justice have been weighed in the same balance as wrong and injustice, maybe the greatest that the centuries have seen. To paid newspapers, to impudent pamphlets or to the compositions of the Spanish betrayer, who has dragged through the world with contempt the name of his mother-country, the same credit has been given as to the voice of the Prelates, or the conscientious study of the moralist, or the authentic narration of the mass of facts which are an affront to human history. Help us to diffuse the truth. Its rights cannot be set aside, especially when it concerns the honour of a people, the prestige of the Church, and the salvation of the world. Help us to divulge the contents of this letter, watching over the Catholic press and propaganda, rectifying the mistakes of that which is indifferent or adverse. The enemy has copiously sowed the cockle ; help us to sow profusely the good seed.

Let us make a final declaration. God knows that we love in the bowels of Christ and that we pardon with all our heart all those who, without knowing what they are doing, have done the gravest damage to the Church and to their country. They are our sons. We implore before God and in their favour the merits of our martyrs, of the ten bishops and of the thousands of priests and Catholics who died forgiving them, and also the suffering, like to a deep sea, which Spain is undergoing. Pray that in our country hatreds may be

extinguished, that souls may draw together, that we may all again be one in the bond of charity. Remember our murdered bishops and so many thousands of priests, religious, and chosen laymen, who perished only because they were the chosen armies of Christ ; and beg the Lord that He may make fruitful their generous blood. Of none of them is it known that he failed in the hour of martyrdom ; by thousands they gave the highest examples of heroism. This is the unwithering glory of our Spain. Help us to pray, and over our country, watered to-day with the blood of brothers, the rainbow of Christian peace will shine once more and our Church, glorious as she is, and our mother-country which has been so fruitful, will be built up together again.

And may the peace of the Lord be with us all, since He has called us all to the great work of universal peace, which is the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the world through the building up of the Body of Christ which is the Church, of which He has made us the Bishops and Shepherds.

We write to you from Spain, making memory of those Brethren who are deceased or absent from their country, on the feast of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the first of July, 1937.

- ✠ ISIDRO Card. GOMÁ Y TOMAS, Archbishop of Toledo ;
- ✠ EUSTAQUIO Card. ILUNDAIN Y ESTEBAN, Archbishop of Seville ;
- ✠ PRUDENCIO, Archbishop of Valencia ;
- ✠ MANUEL, Archbishop of Burgos ;
- ✠ RIGOBERTO, Archbishop of Saragossa ;
- ✠ TOMÁS, Archbishop of Santiago ;
- ✠ AGUSTIN, Archbishop of Granada, Apostolic Administrator of Almeria, Guadix, and Jaen ;



- ✠ JOSÉ, Archbishop-Bishop of Majorca ;
- ✠ ADOLFO, Bishop of Cordoba, Apostolic Administrator of the Bishopric and Priorship of Ciudad Real ;
- ✠ ANTONIO, Bishop of Astorga ;
- ✠ LEOPOLDO, Bishop of Madrid-Alcalá ;
- ✠ MANUEL, Bishop of Palencia ;
- ✠ ENRIQUE, Bishop of Salamanca ;
- ✠ VALENTIN, Bishop of Solsona ;
- ✠ JUSTINO, Bishop of Urgel ;
- ✠ MIGUEL DE LOS SANTOS, Bishop of Cartagena ;
- ✠ FIDEL, Bishop of Calahorra ;
- ✠ FLORENCIO, Bishop of Orense ;
- ✠ RAFAEL, Bishop of Lugo ;
- ✠ FELIX, Bishop of Tortosa ;
- ✠ FR. ALBINO, Bishop of Teneriffe ;
- ✠ JUAN, Bishop of Jaca ;
- ✠ JUAN, Bishop of Vich ;
- ✠ NICANOR, Bishop of Tarazona, Apostolic Administrator of Tudela ;
- ✠ JOSÉ, Bishop of Santander ;
- ✠ FELICIANO, Bishop of Plasencia ;
- ✠ ANTONIO, Bishop of Quersoneso de Creta, Apostolic Administrator of Iviza ;
- ✠ LUCIANO, Bishop of Segovia ;
- ✠ MANUEL, Bishop of Curio, Apostolic Administrator of Ciudad Rodrigo ;
- ✠ MANUEL, Bishop of Zamora ;
- ✠ LINO, Bishop of Huesca ;
- ✠ ANTONIO, Bishop of Tuy ;
- ✠ JOSÉ MARIA, Bishop of Badajoz ;
- ✠ JOSÉ, Bishop of Gerona ;
- ✠ JUSTO, Bishop of Oviedo ;



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- ✠ FR. FRANCISCO, Bishop of Coria ;
- ✠ BENJAMÍN, Bishop of Mondonedo ;
- ✠ TOMÁS, Bishop of Osma ;
- ✠ FR. ANSELMO, Bishop of Teruel-Albarracin ;
- ✠ SANTOS, Bishop of Avila ;
- ✠ BALBINO, Bishop of Malaga ;
- ✠ MARCELINO, Bishop of Pamplona ;
- ✠ ANTONIO, Bishop of the Canaries ;
- HILARIO YABEN, Vicar Capitular of Siguenza ;
- EUGENIO DOMAICA, Vicar Capitular of Cadiz ;
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